

Via Fax (916) 653-8102

February 22, 2005

The Honorable Mike Chrisman
Secretary for Resources
State of California Resources Agency
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Secretary Chrisman:

I am writing to respond to your letter of January 28, 2005 requesting that members of the CEQA Advisory Group offer a brief description of suggestions for changes in the California Environmental Quality Act that would “encourage efficient land use patterns in the development of housing and infrastructure while protecting valuable habitat and productive farmland.”

The State Building and Construction Trades Council supports the Administration’s goal of promoting efficient land use patterns that will facilitate the construction of housing and necessary transportation and public service infrastructure, while at the same time minimizing conversion of important natural resources and agricultural lands. There is increasing evidence that this kind of smart growth is not only good land use and environmental policy, but is also good for construction jobs. A recent report finds that efficient land use patterns produce more and better paying construction jobs than inefficient development patterns. (*The Jobs Are Back In Town, Urban Smart Growth & Construction Employment*, Philip Mattera, Greg LeRoy, November 2003, www.goodjobsfirst.org.)

We question, however, whether the Administration’s singular focus on CEQA will be sufficient to achieve the smart growth objectives we all share. Land use patterns and infrastructure development are influenced by a wide array of governmental decisions and policy choices. These include tax and revenue policy, infrastructure investment and other spending priorities and land use, development and transportation planning and policies.

If the Administration is genuinely committed to encouraging more efficient development patterns, I believe it must fashion a more comprehensive strategy that takes into account the complicated and interrelated factors that impact land use planning and development decisions. Indeed, a logical

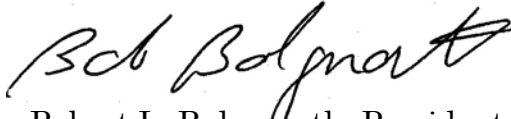
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starting point for this effort would be to identify existing policies and practices that influence land use patterns and to determine how those policies are shaping the California landscape. Only then can a meaningful set of proposals be developed that can ensure that the relevant policies are designed and coordinated to ensure a positive effect on land use and development patterns.

While I look forward to participating in the Administration's review of CEQA, I do not believe that any changes in CEQA alone will have a material effect on shaping land use patterns and infrastructure development. I do believe, however, that a thorough examination of the state and local policies that encourage or discourage smart growth is long overdue. These policies should be revised and coordinated to ensure that public policy choices are leading in the same direction – efficient land use and infrastructure development.

Thank you for considering my views.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Bob Balgenorth" with a stylized flourish at the end.

Robert L. Balgenorth, President
State Building and Construction
Trades Council of California, AFL-CIO

RLB:mb
opeiu#29/afl-cio